

Romaine, Officials Blast LIRR for Lack of Preparation for Looming Strike; Demand Expansion of Shuttle Locations to Service Brookhaven, East End Riders

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Pictured left to right are Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright, Councilman Dan Panico, Supervisor Ed Romaine, Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski, Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri, Ronkonkoma Chamber of Commerce Secretary and Government Relations Kevin Hym and Councilwoman Jane Bonner
Farmingville, NY - Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine was joined by local elected officials, civic leaders and chambers of commerce today in calling on the Long Island Railroad to expand the number of shuttle bus locations for commuters in the event of a strike, and announcing measures the Town will be taking should a strike occur.

Currently, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) plans to offer shuttle service from only one train station, at Ronkonkoma, to service commuters for all of Brookhaven Town and the five east end towns. Supervisor Romaine demanded that the MTA extend shuttle service to LIRR stations at Stony Brook, Port Jefferson, Patchogue and Mastic-Shirley, as well as to other park and ride locations servicing commuters.

"The Long Island Railroad's contingency plan for Brookhaven and points east is ill-conceived and un-manageable," said Supervisor Romaine. "Not only will it greatly inconvenience commuters, but the traffic and parking problems near the Ronkonkoma station will be unprecedented. They must come up with a better solution before we are faced with a disaster."

The Supervisor also outlined the Town's plan to open three parking lots for commuters affected by the strike to use for carpooling:

- Martha Avenue Park, Bellport - located at the Station Road exit of Sunrise Highway
- Percy-Raynor Park, Setauket - located on Route 347
- Brookhaven Town Hall, South Lot - located off County Road 83, near Long Island Expressway Exit 63

Commenting on the Town's plan, Supervisor Romaine said, "I strongly urge commuters who don't use the shuttles to carpool during the strike. If we need to expand our program to other locations, we will."



Aerial view of the crowded parking lots at the Ronkonkoma LIRR Station on a typical day.

In addition, Brookhaven Code Enforcement officers will be strictly enforcing parking regulations in the area surrounding the Ronkonkoma train station to protect local businesses and residents from being impacted during this strike.

Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri said, "Patchogue is prepared to accommodate shuttle service in our railroad parking lot and we are ready to work with the MTA to help make it happen. I commend Supervisor Romaine for taking a leadership role on behalf of the commuters."

Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski, who represents the towns of Riverhead, Southold and parts of eastern Brookhaven said, "Because so much tax money is spent subsidizing the MTA from the East End, this is a local issue of great importance."

Councilman Dan Panico said, "To call the use of the already burdened Ronkonkoma and Deer Park train stations a legitimate contingency plan for the looming strike is patently absurd," commented Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico. "I am not going to get into who is right and who is wrong, I am not privy to the negotiations and that is not my place. However, the MTA's sole responsibility is to maintain the mass transportation lifeline for Long Islanders. The plan they have forwarded thus far will lead to absolute bedlam. They should go back to the drawing board."

Councilwoman Jane Bonner said, "The state and MTA are only too happy to reach into Long Islander's wallets to help balance their bloated budgets, but are unwilling to roll up their sleeves and do the job they are supposed to do. Come up with a workable contingency plan or, even better, settle this problem before it leads to a devastating strike."

Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright said, "The Town is making every effort to mitigate the effects and impact on our commuters. We expect the same, if not more, diligence and planning from the MTA and LIRR. As part of the Town wide effort, my office will be coordinating Park and Ride at Percy Raynor Park in South Setauket. We hope our expectations are met and the commuters receive shuttle service comparable to regularly scheduled train transportation in order to continue to travel to work, appointments, and other obligations."

Kevin Hym, Lake Ronkonkoma Chamber of Commerce Secretary and Government Relations said, "On behalf of the Lake Ronkonkoma Chamber of Commerce, we are in support of the Supervisor taking a proactive role in the pending strike. Our community cannot accommodate the increased burden of thousands of vehicles on our streets. The Supervisor's position of opening Town parking lots for carpooling will be beneficial in helping commuters get through this crisis."

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